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NFAC 4478-78

12 OCT 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Personnel

FROM : Robert R. Bowie  
Director, National Foreign Assessment Center

SUBJECT : Proposed Fitness Report Form

REFERENCE : DDCI Memo to DD/NFAC, dtd 5 October 1978, Subj:  
Follow-up  29-30 September

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1. NFAC management has reviewed the proposal for a new fitness report form discussed at the 30 September conference. We support the general objectives of this approach to performance appraisal, but we have reservations concerning the inclusion of certain elements on the new form, namely the annual work plan, comments by the employee, and evaluation of potential.

2. Under the annual work plan, we believe that the addition of work objectives, goals and priorities would be redundant to the Letter of Instruction (LOI) which we presume will continue to be used. The LOI is viewed in NFAC as an effective management tool; and, as you are aware, we do not support the Task Force recommendation that it be an optional instrument. We prefer to continue to use the LOI as mandatory for all professional and clerical positions and utilize it as originally intended--to be a basis for evaluation in the annual fitness report. With the LOI, the employees know at the beginning of the evaluation period what is expected of them; they have a clearer understanding of expectations because they provide input to the LOI preparation, and importantly, the preparation exercise provides a regularized forum for supervisors and employees to discuss employee performance in a broader context, including job satisfaction, training and personal goals. At the end of the evaluation period, the LOI should be attached to the fitness report addressing the period for which the LOI was prepared.

3. NFAC also does not think that space for employees to comment should be included on the new form. The Agency's present system, which we prefer, allows employees to attach a statement regarding

their fitness report, and it is our impression that people do use this option when they feel it is warranted. To include space for such statements in the new form would lead many employees to feel a need to respond, thus encouraging nit-picking and a conflict situation with the supervisor rather than the desired constructive relationship.

4. Regarding evaluation of potential, we feel that it is not consistent with the objectives of the fitness report--properly called Performance Appraisal Report--which is focused on the evaluation of performance for the period under consideration. Other more effective vehicles are available in NFAC to evaluate potential, namely office career panels and special directorate-level panels that advise the Chairman of the NFAC Career Service Board. These panels can and do provide a more-knowledgeable evaluation of potential than the employee's immediate supervisor whose perspective and understanding of "potential" are seriously limited compared with the broader-based, collective input of the panels. We view this as being a general problem regardless of the grade of the supervisor, but suspect it would be especially acute at the lower grades. In any event, input for potential evaluation should come from managers, past supervisors and others who have the required knowledge, not a single supervisor regardless of his position.

5. Two other elements of the new form--the descriptors of the seven-point scale and required comment on EEO, safety, security, evaluation of supervisors, etc.--are of NFAC concern. Here, however, questions focus on definitions and overloading of the fitness report:

- ° The seven-point scale is a good idea, but the definitions as drafted concentrate on how much supervision is required and meeting deadlines, rather than on the effectiveness of job performance. It is suggested that a panel with representation from each career service be established to redraft the definitions.
- ° Finally, the requirement in the narrative portion to comment on EEO, security, cost consciousness, safety and evaluation of supervisors overloads the report. On EEO alone there are ten factors to be considered according to recent direction. This requirement detracts from the main purpose of the fitness report--

evaluating how well the employee does the job to be done--and inevitably leads to stock phrases that have little meaning. How to deal with this problem also should be the subject of a panel made up of the various career services.



Robert R. Bowie

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